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WHAT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THINK OF THE MONROE DOCTRINE¹

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It would be interesting to present a picture of the many international conflicts which the Monroe Doctrine has prevented, and at the same time to attempt to portray what would have been the probable condition of affairs on the American continent had the Monroe Doctrine never been promulgated. But it is impossible for any human brain to furnish a detailed picture of this imaginary situation. To do so would require the prophetic vision of a seer.

No stretch of imagination is necessary, however, to recognize clearly that Central and South America without this great *principle of isolation* would be a field of great rivalry for colonization; a rivalry which, on account of the higher value of the prizes offered, and also on account of the greater power of resistance of the American States in question, would make the struggle for the division of Africa seem small in comparison, and cause the shedding of rivers of blood. This side of the Monroe Doctrine is, as a rule, not yet sufficiently understood, and hence not appreciated, by the public opinion of Europe, which follows, registers, notes and criticizes the circumstances in which this dogma of American politics is applied.

European interest in the Monroe Doctrine, at least in the three countries chiefly concerned, viz., Germany, England and France, is uncommonly great. In Europe as in America it is only necessary to connect a particular incident with the Monroe Doctrine in order to arouse a lively public interest. Very different, however, are the feelings which this word arouses on the opposite shores of the Atlantic. In the United States one always finds confirmed the words of one of its leading statesmen, who once wrote me that "it may, indeed, almost be said that all our government has to do to rally the people to the support of any measure . . . is to couple it with the revered title of the Monroe Doctrine."

¹ Compare with the following my book, entitled *The Monroe Doctrine in its Relation to American Diplomacy and to International Law*, published by J. Guttentag, Berlin, 1913.

European opinion, on the contrary, generally taking a critical attitude towards such matters as are coupled with the Monroe Doctrine, oscillates between a dignified reserve and a certain distrust which soon develops into open hostility on the part of the chauvinistic press. That Europe has not fully appreciated the causes, aims and accomplishments of this doctrine, and that the full comprehension of its character and its tasks only slowly and hesitatingly makes its way in the public opinion, is hardly to be wondered at. Is the situation, after all, very different in the United States? How many are there in that country who really have a correct idea of the purport and limitations of the Monroe Doctrine, based on an intimate and unprejudiced knowledge? How often, for instance, is it associated with affairs with which it has no connection whatever? For example, what relation has it with the much discussed question of the Panama Canal tolls? This controversy is nothing more than a dispute about the interpretation of treaty rights. And yet the Monroe Doctrine is incessantly drawn into the discussion. Even such a man as Champ Clark declared in his recent speech, in the House, against the amendment to the Panama Canal act, that "repeal would mean practical abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine."

Although some German papers recently went so far as to express the opinion that the journey of Prince Henry of Prussia, the Kaiser's brother, to South America, was a protest on the part of the Kaiser against the Monroe Doctrine, and that he was thereby showing that he did not feel himself bound by it, nevertheless the people of Germany treat such a groundless statement with the contempt it deserves.

The chief difficulty the European experiences in interpreting the doctrine lies in the fact that he unconsciously judges American conditions and affairs by European standards. It would require a conscious effort for the people of a continent whose political sense and feeling are at present influenced by an incessant rivalry for colonial expansion, to conceive that a state may have any other political ideal; that its ambition may not necessarily strive for increase of power by colonial acquisitions.²

That the United States, until now, has not shared such ambi-

² Not to be confused with the tendency always alive in the United States to extend the existing boundaries at the cost of its neighbors. See my book, noted above, p. 339.

tions is proved by the history of her foreign policy. This policy furnishes an almost unbroken line of examples to sustain such a contention, with the single exception of the wave of imperialism directed toward colonial expansion which arose at the time of the war with Spain, but which quickly subsided. It is impossible to understand American foreign policy, and with it the Monroe Doctrine, without thoroughly considering this difference between the political ideals of Europe and the United States—a difference which, at present, undoubtedly exists.

On the other hand, I may venture to say that the feeling in Europe towards the Monroe Doctrine is slowly changing. It is true, one sometimes reads, even now, heated arguments against this doctrine, in which, unfortunately, is often quoted that remark made by Bismarck when he called the Monroe Doctrine "an international impertinence." But such arguments seem to become less frequent, and, on the whole, the number of sensible and more reasonable critics, who consider the merits as well as the weaknesses of the Monroe Doctrine, steadily increases. A convincing appeal may be made to the teachings of history. They refute the hitherto generally accepted argument raised against the doctrine, that its purpose was to give to the United States a monopoly of political expansion on the American continent. In fact, not one instance can be proved in which the United States has added territory in America under the protection of the Monroe Doctrine. What she has done again and again, acting on this principle, is to prevent the over-sea expansion of any non-American state.

Of particular interest is the change of public opinion in Europe in another direction. Formerly discussion was chiefly centered on question of the justification, or rather the lack of justification, for the existence of the doctrine. This question has now been relegated to the background by two others. One is whether the United States can and will maintain the Monroe Doctrine, or whether, in the course of time this principle will turn against the country which formulated it and become a burden. The second question involves the duty of the United States, resulting from the doctrine, to provide for peace and order in Central and South America, and a reasonable protection for non-American interests. Events in Mexico, prior to the recent active measures on the part of the United States, chiefly the murder of the British subject Benton, have given a number of

European newspapers the opportunity to remind the United States of her duty—to play the rôle of American policeman—a duty which ex-President Roosevelt, in particular, repeatedly emphasized as a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.³ When, however, the United States interfered in Mexico most of those newspapers had, unfortunately, already forgotten their former admonition.

It is clear that Europeans, becoming more and more reconciled to the Monroe Doctrine, accept it as an existing fact and begin to discuss its consequences.

The above refers only to the old style Monroe Doctrine, to the doctrine which wants to prevent the increase of political power of non-American States in America, and which may be styled the political Monroe Doctrine. The affair takes a different aspect when we consider that new tendency to extend the doctrine into a prevention or limitation of the purely economic activity of non-American States, or their citizens, in America.

But one cannot say that the Monroe Doctrine has actually developed in this direction, although such a development would not be inconsistent with its character. Its transformation into a "commercial Monroe Doctrine" is relatively easy, and signs are not wanting that it already tends toward a development in this direction.⁴ Recall the last stage of the Panama Canal affair, and recall more especially the Magdalena Bay incident.⁵ It is clear that such a claim as "America for the Americans, economically as well as politically" would meet with an opposition and attack far more violent than any which the political Monroe Doctrine has ever aroused. It is probable that these attacks would come not only from the non-American camp, but also from American and even from the United States itself.

³ Compare his words in the annual message of December 6, 1904. "The adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrong-doing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power."

⁴ One is reminded of Jefferson, who wrote to Governor Claiborne on October 29, 1808: "We shall be well satisfied to see Cuba and Mexico remain in their present dependence; but very unwilling to see them in that of either France or England, politically or commercially. We consider their interests and ours are the same and that the object of both must be to exclude all European influence from this hemisphere." (Moore's *Digest*, vi, 371).

⁵ For further particulars on this point which forbids of enlargement here, see my book, noted above, pp. 217-230.

It is difficult to formulate a decided opinion as to the attitude of European diplomacy toward the Monroe Doctrine. Available material, necessary for that purpose, is lacking. One fact, however, is certain, viz., the Monroe Doctrine, to the present time, has not been expressly recognized as a rule of *international law* by any country.

The question as to whether it has been internationally recognized as a *political principle* of the United States is of no great importance. Since it is, in fact, a political principle of the United States which has been in practice for almost a century, such a recognition would be only the acknowledgment of an existing fact, and as such would have no real significance. It is of much greater importance to note that the other states evidently reckon with the doctrine as a factor which must be taken into consideration.

The last instance in which a European state questioned the validity of the Monroe Doctrine was the controversy between England and the United States as to the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, commonly known as the "Venezuelan boundary dispute." In the settlement of this dispute the United States won its most brilliant diplomatic victory for the doctrine. The victory was so complete that the affair has repeatedly given occasion for the assertion that England, by her attitude, actually recognized the Monroe Doctrine as a principle of international law.

Since the time of the Venezuelan boundary dispute there has been only one dubious example of a disregard for the great American doctrine—the Magdalena Bay incident with Japan in 1912. Even here the Japanese government did not contend that the Monroe Doctrine could not hinder the acquisition by a Japanese syndicate of a concession of land from Mexico in lower California, to which the United States objected, but simply denied that such a transaction was being carried out.

The case of the Venezuelan debts of 1901–1904 gave the German government occasion for the celebrated declaration "that under no circumstances do we consider in our proceedings the acquisition or the permanent occupation of Venezuelan territory,"⁶ a declaration which some, incorrectly, have construed as a recognition of the Monroe Doctrine by that government.

It is even reported that during the recent Mexican troubles some

⁶ Prememoria of the Imperial German Embassy at Washington, December 11, 1901. (Moore's *Digest*, vi, 588)

European governments have directly applied to the United States to act as intermediary in seeking redress for the injustice which their subjects have suffered in Mexico (consider in this connection the Benton case). Should these reports prove true it would be such a perfect acquiescence in the doctrine, of the governments concerned, that the jurist would have to consider seriously the question: Have not these powers actually conceded such a position to the United States on the American continent, that she is entitled to the general observance of the principle that the Monroe Doctrine proclaims?

In conclusion, it is evident and most important, in my opinion, that nations should make every effort to get an impartial and unprejudiced knowledge of their mutual standpoints and respective aims before they criticize one another's actions.